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DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR YVETTE SAINT-ANDRE

OSD FOR COMMANDER CHAFFEE

WHITEHOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE

E.O. 12958: N/A  
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SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: March 06, 2007

#### Molterer Favors Kerosene Tax

¶1. Following a call for the introduction of a tax on kerosene by Minister for the Environment Josef Proell, Vice-Chancellor and Finance Minister Wilhelm Molterer has also spoken in favor of such a move. It would be a "politically sensible" measure with regard to climate protection goals, and could also boost the EU's financial assets. Increasing the European Union's financial resources would be a good strategy, and take some of the burden off the EU's net payers, including Austria, Molterer suggested, according to centrist daily Die Presse.

#### Air Crash Kills Eight

¶2. Austrian officials are trying to determine what led to the crash yesterday between a helicopter and small passenger plane near Zell am See in Salzburg province, although officials say it was most likely the consequence of human failure. Eight people died in the collision, ORF online news reports like all Austrian media.

#### Nuclear Energy Divides EU

¶3. Semi-official daily Wiener Zeitung writes that European Union heads of state and government are to debate ambitious climate protection goals when they meet on Friday. As part of the effort for a "compulsive" minimum requirement of a 20 percent share of renewable energies by 2020, France has now launched a debate on the use of nuclear energy, which should be considered as part of the climate protection agenda, France's Minister for EU Issues Catherine Colonna stressed. Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik, however, has dismissed the move as "not effective."

#### Gusenbauer on US, Russia

¶4. An Austrian tabloid reports that a few days ahead of the EU summit, Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer, appearing on Bloomberg TV in his first interview with international media, found clear words to outline his foreign policy agenda. Mass-circulation tabloid Kronen Zeitung writes that Austrian Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer in an interview with Bloomberg TV expressed his concern over the planned missile defense shield the United States wants to set up in Poland and the Czech Republic. He called on Europe to push for a "moderating influence" in order to defuse emerging tensions, and warned recent tones from Moscow on the issue were "problematic, particularly should they be the signs of an

imminent new arms race." Gusenbauer urged that NATO be included in the process to resolve the issue, and warned both Moscow and Washington: "Both have lessons to learn; the US that it is not the only one to make decisions in the world, while Russia has to understand that even the growing importance of its energy reserves will not give it back the position of power it held during the Cold War. The times are past when a superpower could decide what is good for the rest of the world. As Europeans, we are charged with the noble task of creating the basis for stability," Gusenbauer emphasized.

#### New Tensions in the Far East

15. Several Austrian media report on new tensions between China and Taiwan: While the Taiwanese President is pushing for independence for his country, China is threatening it might consider a military strike against Taiwan. According to one Austrian daily, Taiwan's most recent bid for independence may have been triggered by domestic policy reasons.

In his commentary entitled "Taiwan's risky game with China," deputy chief editor Viktor Hermann argues in independent provincial daily Salzburger Nachrichten: "Taiwanese president Chen Shui-Bian has shown expert timing for attracting attention - both at home and abroad. His announcement that Taiwan will change its constitution and launch its bid for full independence certainly had the desired effect: Beijing, with the National People's Congress underway, was clearly not prepared for this kind of provocation. (...) Chen probably needs a bit of trouble with China and the threats from Beijing to deflect from Taiwan's own domestic problems. (...) But the economic ties between China and its 'maverick province' are far too close for both sides to jeopardize the advantages they bring. In addition, China and Taiwan both want to come across as reliable partners for the international community, who do not want to cause crises over each and every little dispute. This, in turn, points to an aspect Chen should be aware of: Taiwan is diplomatically isolated and dependent on US support -- militarily as much as politically. Washington will guarantee the island's security, but it does not want any pointless quarrels with Beijing."

#### US and North Korea Launch Talks

16. Landmark talks have opened in New York between the United States and North Korea, aimed at normalizing diplomatic relations. The two countries have not had full ties since the end of the Korean War more than 50 years ago. The meeting follows North Korea's agreement to abandon part of its nuclear program.

The talks, which are scheduled to conclude Tuesday, are to focus on establishing bilateral contacts between the US and Pyongyang, which are to eventually lead to the resumption of diplomatic relations, says liberal daily Der Standard.

#### Protestors Support Ocalan

17. Around fifty people demonstrated in support of Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan at the entrance to the United Nations' Vienna headquarters on Monday. Ocalan has been in a Turkish prison since

1999. The protesters say Turkey is poisoning him and called on the UN to act. In the face of the protestors' accusations, the Turkish government has commissioned a medical check-up for Abdullah Ocalan, according to a report on ORF TV's prime time news Zeit im Bild I on Monday.

#### US Support For Latin America

18. US President George W. Bush has promised millions of dollars in aid for Latin America's poor two days before his tour of the region. The money is to go towards education, housing and healthcare programs, says. ORF radio early morning news Morgenjournal. McCaw